

Improving the Fitness Report Program

Chief, Review Staff
626 C of C Bldg

3465

18 Apr 1972

DD/Pers/P&C
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Director of Personnel
5 E 56 Headquarters

Per your request this covers transmittal of proposed improvements in the Fitness Report Program to the Executive Director-Comptroller in a format suitable for consideration by the Deputies.


Chief, Review Staff

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT : Improving the Fitness Report Program

1. From a review of the Agency's performance evaluation system and Federal personnel management plans in this area we recommend certain changes to improve the Fitness Report Program. These recommendations are contained in the Attachment, which would be suitable for presentation in a meeting of the Deputy Directors should you wish to do so.

2. There is no current prospect of major changes in Federal performance evaluation programs which would bear on this Agency's system.

a. A representative of the Civil Service Commission advises that the Commission contemplates no significant changes in current policies and procedures for performance evaluation in the foreseeable future. The Commission will continue to review and approve systems as developed by Federal agencies within the present policy framework as established in the Federal Personnel Manual. Ordinarily such plans will have three rating levels: Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory.

b. The Foreign Affairs Manual was amended recently to require that the rated officer, after reviewing the completed report and the reviewing officer's comments, append a statement "Certifying that the rating officer discussed the performance and the report ... with the rated officer and commenting on the extent to which adequate goals or standards for the rated officer's performance had been established. The rated officer may rebut the evaluation ... and comment on its contents if he chooses." Responsible planning officers in the Department also advise that other proposals which are being developed for possible future consideration would discontinue numerical ratings, call for employees' self appraisals, and generally allow raters more freedom in presenting comment on significant aspects of performance.

3. This Agency's system of performance evaluation evolved through at least a dozen significant modifications during the last twenty years. In its present form it represents practical adjustments in consideration of multiple and sometimes conflicting management objectives. For example:

a. The advantages to the Agency of a single system have been found to outweigh possible advantages which might derive from the development of different systems to meet more directly the specific needs of the several career services.

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b. Although "Unsatisfactory," "Satisfactory," and "Outstanding" rating categories would probably satisfy Agency level interests in evaluating individual performance, a scale of five categories has proven to be more useful and adaptable to the more refined needs of the several career services. These adaptations have been formalized in some cases through component publications of special guidance to various groups of supervisors in the use of the Fitness Report.

c. In response to shifts in the focus of management's interest the Agency system has moved from showing the employee the full report of his performance evaluation to showing him one-half of a two-part report (Performance and Potential) to, as now, showing the employee all of the report except the comment of the reviewing official.

d. From time to time some of the five rating categories have been renamed to accommodate changes in management's interest. For example, at various times management has looked to the system for statistical comparisons in accordance with a normal distribution curve, for distinctions between the levels of performance among the majority of employees who are performing within acceptable limits, and for the identification of employees whose performance is marginal and requires corrective action.

4. This review has led us to conclude that it would be in the Agency's interest to retain the basic format of the current Fitness Report with five rating categories. This will continue to provide enough standardization to allow comparisons of the ratings in different components of the Agency and will ensure continuation of the ability to make comparisons of current and future ratings with past records of performance. As in the past modifications of items within this framework can be made in response to shifts in management interest.

5. I will be glad to discuss these proposals with you at your convenience.

Harry B. Fisher
Director of Personnel

Att

Distribution:

Original - Addressee

1 - ER

2 - D/Pers

2 - C/RS (1 w/h)

OP/P&C/RS/ [REDACTED] :dbw (28 Apr 72)

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Improving the Fitness Report Program

1. We are making minor changes in the Fitness Report to implement improved career selection procedures and the PERFIT sub-system of SIPS. This is an opportune time to effect certain other improvements in the program as well.

a. The Fitness Report Program is deficient in that it denies employees access to the comments of their reviewing officials. Most experienced employees will have seen Fitness Reports wherein the official evaluation of performance as recorded and understood by an employee and his supervisor has been altered significantly and without their knowledge by the comments of the reviewing official concerned. Thus, this very important information becomes immediately available to all who have access to the official record, but is denied to the employee for whom it is of greatest concern. Sometimes this practice has been defended on grounds that an employee should not know the reviewing official's comments about his potential or how the reviewing official evaluates the liberality or strictness of the rater. It has also been said that the comments of reviewing officials would be less objective and candid if they knew that the employees concerned would see them. These arguments do not hold water. An employee should see the official evaluation of his performance and any remarks concerning his potential as recorded on his Fitness Report by both his rating and reviewing officers; and, the comments of one should be no less forthright than those of the other. Furthermore, current instructions that the reviewing official should comment upon the "liberality or strictness of the rater" seem out of order. Such comment does not belong in the Fitness Report on the employee being rated. Presumably, both rating and reviewing officials record their honest evaluations, and there is legitimate room for differences between them.

Recommendation: The Fitness Report format should be rearranged to make the employee's certification the last item on the form and have it cover the entries in all parts of the form, including the comments of the reviewing official.

b. The Fitness Report System should go further than it does to encourage employees' participation in the evaluation process. Although current instructions provide that "the person being rated may attach a memorandum concerning any part of the Report," the statement is more or less buried among other items of instruction. It would improve the system to include a more positive statement of encouragement on the Fitness Report form itself. This would offer

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some response to the frequently expressed complaint that management lacks interest in employees' views concerning their work arrangements and their aspirations for career development.

Recommendation: The Fitness Report form should be revised to include a statement inviting the employee to attach as part of the official record a memorandum including any comments he wishes to make about his performance evaluation, his work situation, or his interests in career development.

c. Publications issued by various components to guide supervisors in the most effective use of Fitness Reports have been helpful in adapting the system to different work requirements.

Recommendation: A Notice should be issued to encourage operating officials at the office level to supplement Agency regulations in appropriate circumstances by publishing guidance to supervisors under their jurisdiction concerning those characteristics and qualities of performance which are of particular significance for evaluation.

d. The sometime practice of marking Fitness Reports prepared in particular components in some manner to suggest that they are truly "objective" and "valid" serves no useful purpose and should be discontinued. There is no evidence that Reports prepared in any particular component are in fact more reliable than those prepared elsewhere.

Recommendation: Agency regulations should be changed to prohibit marking Fitness Reports to suggest that the evaluations therein are characterized by special objectivity or validity.

2. With your approval, the Director of Personnel will initiate action to implement the above recommendations.

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Handicapped —

memo

Case - worrisome

buddy system

Minorities

Over qualified recruiting

DCI 16 May 10th Conference

Decentralized mgmt

Insisting on sameness would drain vitality

Central regime

Indoc, trng, assignments - command functions which must be so

Where does OP fit

Recruiting

Sympathetic etc. retirement help

Per people must be members of mgmt team

Depts Mtr - very often pers matters

Spec Committee Bd of Directors

Mgmt problem crossing Directorate lines

Next few years - OP must focus on ^{agony} ~~doing~~ cut site

Cut jobs, grades,

mgmt must if smart turn to OP

not policeman but professional mental assist

Counseling individual employees

Providing info to help individuals make own decisions

What do people know of agency + jobs + what do we know about people. Match people + jobs.

Reducing mobility - clerical + professional

Advancement opportunities reduced - problem
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Info program will be important

Reduced mobility - extemporaneous

2200 fewer on rolls last 5 years

DCI believes jobs can be done + better with fewer people.

^{One} Fewer hand working better than 3 time renews

Pac may slow promotions etc but this is way we must go

People must know true facts - don't try fool people to contrary

Agency has nothing but its people - make it or break it or fall flat

Personnel officer has good role - deal - the work environment

Minority? - no hang up - not done very well

no reduction standards as to accomplish - job too much

standards should be picked up

Agency wide vacancy notice system? No objection to doing this. Let's try innovative ideas.

Must be better ways than that crash

Greater productivity = greater cut in job

Setting around fuddy duddy supervisor.

Intel community to change near term? Not anticipated

PFAB assess intel community? yes, one of imp roles.

College educated or sponsored training? Best candidate should have ^{wide ranging} education ^{well rounded}
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gen education, train + educate later. No intel academy
Brains + info. Techniques not that difficult.

DRUG problem - Agency stance

no condoning the or involvement

We as rigid as anyone can be

apart from effect on capacity - we father mother etc

We tough + no sympathy

Collective bargaining - pay + conditions of work based on

- Pres Eye Order

no particular stand - don't see advantage or
how it would work

not very sympathetic to this approach but not taking stand
of issue ^{if it} - why not see if not other ways to deal

Charge of lack of control - what should agency do?

Newspaper editors - lofty position

tell you what to do but not how

last para Joe Kraft today

I know who gave me orders + I pay attention when speak

D.

This was a paper we had to prepare in response to ExDir request, following IG Survey of IAS. I thought it also met Bill C.'s requirement for a paper on Young Professionals. We describe problem and recommend possible job restructuring - Bill C. called to tell me this was "splendid paper."

B.

Bill C. believes this paper will be the hit of the program. It displays dramatically the number of PRA assignments of supergrades and that 10 have endured for over 5 years. He also believes the annual review concept has merit - I do too - but I'm not sure all Deputies will react as he expects.

Pass on R, L, M

Personnel

A. In Exec. Dev. paper - Executive Committee means Deputies Meeting - In writing required response to CSC we used Ex. Comm - as more meaningful than Deputies Meeting - this was carried over in this paper.

This paper expresses a need (obvious) to improve Exec. Dev - and then provides guide lines to achieve. PMMP is mentioned but nothing in this paper has been placed in concrete - We plan to rebrief Deputies on streamlined PMMP and hopefully get their endorsement to proceed -

B. Bill C. believes this ^{paper} will be the hit of the program. It displays dramatically the number of PRA assignments ^{of Supergrades} and that is have endured for over 5 years. He also believes the annual review concept has merit — I do too — but I'm not sure all Deputies will react as he expects.

C. Needs little explanation — again Bill C. is impressed that only 13 Support careerist GS 14 and above are 37 or under. Each Deputy has his own list — Carl and Ed look better than Support — GS very similar.

forward

E.

This paper produced on demand is a motherhood type. We state obvious barriers to mobility and then some suggestions. It is intended to stimulate discussion.

D. This was a paper we had to prepare in response to Ex Dir request, following I G Survey of IAS. I thought it also met Bill C's requirement for a paper on Young Professionals. We describe problem and recommend possible job restructuring— Bill C. called to tell me this was "splendid paper". ??

E. This paper produced on demand is a muckraker type. We state obvious barriers to mobility and then some suggestions. It is intended to stimulate discussion.

F. Vacancy Notice - is really one part of increasing mobility and Rotation. When your Office Head notes it down there are

H. EEO - Believe you on top of this

Note - PMMP paper - requesting approval -
not included.

Career Service Survey paper not included
and will not be discussed

Fitness Report paper not included
but Bill C. intends to include - i.e.

Reviewing officer should show his remarks
as opposed to present may show - also
we are suggesting more emphasis on
rated man's opportunity to comment -

QSI paper not included and not
needed - It is merely statistical report
showing QSI activity by Career Service

Communications paper not included - It

For summary he used only six
of about 11 or 12 papers we sent forward.

Jim on call if you want to
discuss further

ILLEGIB

Tab 1. I believe IC is overstating requirement in FY 73. Would guess they could get by with 25-30 in FY 73 and balance in FY 74

Believe Bill C. leans towards absorbing cuts to continue downward trend line - DCI said much the same in his talk to Pers. people. If IC can get by with say 25 in 73 - we would be talking about absorbing a 47 addl. cut elsewhere in Agency ($72 - 25 = 47$). If no further external cut imposed for FY 1974 I believe Agency could also absorb additional cut of 66 ($123 - 47 = 66$) in FY 74. I believe most of these cuts would be transfer of positions to establish new ones with people being transferred internally to fill i.e.

IC will meet many requirements internally

DDP [redacted] transfer of CS people

Tab 1- continued - I would tend to vote for option 3 - absorb - i.e. stay flat in FY 74 - we need one year respite from cuts to stabilize, improve imbalances in mix - and to increase flow of young professionals into Agency. We might then be ready to again cut in FY 75

ILLEGIB

Tab J- [REDACTED]

I am inclined to a third option - I'd make a reasonable redistribution of vacancies - leaving DDP enough to meet 74 requirements and then ask for balance of say 50 ^{contract position} in routine budget submission. If questioned by OMB we could then show that we made good management effort to distribute vacancies and asked only for additional slots needed

F.

Vacancy Notice - is really one part of increasing mobility and rotation. When your Office Heads note it down they are doing so without knowing what is really meant. They visualize a vacancy notice every time a job opens up - with all interested encouraged to apply - this not intended.

At other extreme is when you have position which you can't fill (which is rare indeed) vacancy notice to be used.

We could probably get better use of vacancy notices within Directorates and within Career Services - at least employees should have ability to go to centralized point (D/Pers) where info on all vacancies kept.

I.

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IC will meet many requirements internally

DD/ [REDACTED] - transfer of CS people

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Commo - I assume same

I would tend to vote for option 3 - absorb - i. e. - stay flat in FY 74 we need one year respite from cuts to stabilize, improve imbalances in mix - and to increase flow of young professionals into Agency. We might then be ready to again cut in FY 75.

J.

Major Issue 2.

I am inclined to a third option - I'd make a reasonable redistribution of vacancies - leaving DD/P enough to meet 74 requirements and then ask for balance of say 50 contract positions in routine budget submission. If questioned by OMB we could then show that we made good management effort to distribute vacancies and asked only for additional slots needed.